

REARMEMENT MORAL · CAUX

Centre de Rencontres Internationales

TÉL. 021/963 48 21
TÉLÉFAX 021/963 52 60
TÉLÉGRAMME CAUXVAUD

MOUNTAIN HOUSE
RUE DU PANOPAMA
CH - 1824 CAUX

Wednesday, 23rd August, 1995

Dear friends,

I must start with an apology. I have rediscovered the joys of a Monday morning without writing a letter, the relaxation, the freedom from stress! But it wasn't a premeditated act, so I didn't warn you in my previous letter. Just as I was heading for bed on Sunday night, a friend suggested delaying the letter a couple of days, to bring us nearer to the close of the conferences, and just write one last letter - and this seemed such a good, logical idea. So here it is, though you will miss out on an account of the 'Regions in celebration' evening tonight, with contributions from many of the diverse groups in the house, and the final meeting tomorrow morning. Then we must empty the house as swiftly as maybe, while some helpers stay to effect the change-over to the hotel school which opens next week. So farewell until next year.

The black sky outside the window reminds me that autumn is racing on, the summer has sped past. And as I start to distinguish sky from trees and earth, it is clear that we are in for another overcast, wet-ish day. I'm sorry that we haven't found a way to export our rain. There was one anxious 'phone call after my last letter, expressing concern about the 'mudslides and rock-falls', but I hadn't understood the half of it. The motorway below Caux, just beyond the Chateau de Chillon was closed for four days due to an avalanche of rock and mud. Fortunately no-one was badly hurt, but it was a reminder that even in Switzerland, nature remains the strongest.

On Monday, I gave the last Caux Anniversary Lecture - the German guest-speaker was unable to come, will come next year - and I talked on 'The old lady on the mountain - 50 years of Mountain House at the service of the world', based on the beginnings of the book that I am writing about Caux. Yesterday, Christiane Mallet-Watteville, one of those who was here in 1946, spoke about the Great Gardener who plants seeds in the humus of our hurts, as individuals and as nations. When we look back, we see some signs that He does indeed nurture some great fruits out of frail beginnings in individual hearts, and this encourages us to believe that we may be seeing seeds sown now that will bear fruit in the years to come.

The 'Regions in crisis, regions in recovery' session opened with the colour and song of a group of Tanzanian women, and we swiftly got an idea of the remarkable variety of people and situations present: a delegation of three from the Chinese Association for International Understanding, the Governor General of Jamaica, with 40 of his compatriots, who gave us a memorable evening of music, poetry and prayer, a Mohawk chief from Canada, two Burundians in exile, one in Italy, the other in Canada, who know each other well and have been corresponding, but neither knew that the other was coming. An Italian translates into Swahili for a Tanzanian woman. 'There are more diplomas than people in our community discussion group,' notes a friend.

One of the great landmark occasions of the summer, one of the historic days of Caux, was the previous Monday's lecture by South African Professor Willie Esterhuyse. It was followed by a memorable afternoon seminar, where he spoke more of his own personal experience, along with Sam Pono, and a South African Indian professor of theology. The two events were a moving reminder of the wonders that God and his chosen instruments have wrought in a situation that seemed without hope. Most of the questions after Esterhuyse's lecture came from other Africans, and the evening closed with General Lagu from Sudan embracing him, after a vote of thanks - a literal welcoming back into the bosom of Africa!

There have been signs of other seeds of hope sown on African soil. Four Somalians, from different corners of the country spoke together, and then almost surprised themselves by singing together, a symbol of their unity. 'At school we are taught how to solve simple mathematical problems like $2 + 2 = 4$. But no-one teaches us the sum of fear + fear, and how to solve that problem,' said one of them. 'Here I have found the solution. It comes when you can see and tell the truth about yourself, when you are really open before God about what goes on in your heart. Here a reconciliation started to happen between us which no-one thought would be possible.' He went on that all had expected further fighting when the UN troops left their country, but to everyone's surprise that hadn't happened. 'I even dare to believe that what happened to us here at Caux last summer played its part in this development,' he said, 'though we are still at the very beginning of this reconciliation process for our nation.'

Mammo Wudneh, a well-known journalist, author and poet from Ethiopia, said, 'When I returned from Caux, I took some essential spare parts for my mind and spirit which have been well used and shared with others. Now I needed to be renewed and re-equipped with fresh spare parts to take back for the hard task we face in reconstructing our country.' You may have read his remarkable story in 'For a Change'. A refugee from Burundi spoke of his study of the processes of domination, and how this had led him to just the opposite of the standards that he met in Caux. His fellow countryman made one of the shortest speeches on record: 'Lord, teach me to love.'

'It was nine years ago now that I dropped my burden of hatred here in Caux,' says a Cambodian woman, introducing the 13 from her country, including the Supreme Buddhist Patriarch. There was a showing for the conference of the Channers', father and son's, new film from Cambodia, 'The Serene Smile'. Alan Griffiths from Australia commented, 'It's a great privilege to watch this film with Cambodians, and to see that they regard this film as a treasure. It touches me deeply.' There have been 17 Lebanese, a Palestinian Dutch Imam, a Jewish Rabbi who refused to serve with the Israeli army when it invaded Lebanon. 'The closest thing we have to God is the spark of life in each one,' the Rabbi said, 'and if we deny others equality, we deny God.' There was an evening with an Algerian family on the problems of their country; there have been experiences from the family, from the home, dealing with relationships, drugs, illness. Signs that the Great Gardener is at work.

And now our sights turn to Caux 1996! There will shortly be a report from the 'Caux 50th anniversary trio', available from World Bulletin distributors and all members of the 'Council' which gives a summary of all the decisions and discussions of this summer, and top copies of the inserts so far ready for use with the invitation-folder.

With weary, grateful hearts,

Andrew Stallybrass

Andrew